

Smart Start / Strong Future

Health, Safety and Success for Alaska's Children – funded with \$9.2m general funds and \$4.1m tobacco settlement; federal dollars pending

The well-being of Alaska's children has been a top priority of the Knowles/Ulmer Administration and its Children's Cabinet. Research backs up what the Children's Cabinet has recommended – if we take care of children early on, they will take better care of themselves later on. The current initiative continues the progress begun under *SMART START* and has three goals: improve child health; keep children safe; and help children succeed.

Healthy Children — \$3.7 million of general funds plus \$5.4 tobacco and other funds

Reduce tobacco use, especially among young people. More than one out of four Alaskans is addicted to tobacco, a substance that kills half of all long-term users. An additional \$4.1 million of the 20% set aside from the tobacco settlement will build prevention and cessation programs that save lives by preventing youth smoking. With this additional investment, Alaska will spend \$7.4 million from the settlement on anti-tobacco programs in FY2003.

Expand alcohol treatment for women and children. \$1.2 million will build treatment capacity so the 61 women on the wait list can enter treatment with their children, resulting in fewer children placed in foster homes. Another \$839,100 will expand the juvenile alcohol safety program beyond the current four pilot sites and provide funds for youth treatment.

Prevent inhalant abuse among young people. One in five students have used an inhalant to get high by the time he/she reaches the eighth grade. \$470,000 will be used in nine to twelve communities each year to reduce inhalant abuse among children and youth.

Improve children's overall health. Since children learn best in a healthy environment, the Department of Environmental Conservation will incorporate environmental health training and outreach into existing programs for school and day care facilities. The project will focus on drinking water, wastewater, sanitation, food safety, pesticide management and indoor air quality. New mental health clinicians in the Division of Family and Youth Services will help social workers and foster parents work with special needs children. The Infant Learning Program will be able to increase services for difficult to serve children. The WIC-Farmers Market will be expanded to improve the health and nutrition of women, infants and children while supporting Alaska's farmers.

Prevent suicides. Alaska leads the nation in suicides. Alaska's rate of 23.7 per 100,000 is over twice the national average. The Alaska Native teen suicide rate is an even more alarming 197.5 per 100,000. A \$500,000 expansion of suicide prevention grants will provide up to 35 counselors who can intervene or provide community training, intervention and referrals.

Safe Children —\$4.9 million general funds plus \$2.7 million federal and other funds

Zero tolerance for child abuse and neglect. The goal of zero tolerance is to respond to all legitimate child abuse reports of harm. With \$825,000, State Troopers will be able to respond to all high priority child abuse and sexual abuse reports within 24 hours. \$975,000 will expand the Family Assessment Response grant program beyond the pilot site in Mat-Su to the three areas where social workers cannot respond to 100% of the calls (Fairbanks, Bethel and Kenai).

Alaska has one of the highest rates of child abuse and neglect in the US. \$1 million in federal funds will expand Child Advocacy Center programs, which provide a central, less traumatic setting for child abuse investigations. Mental Health stabilization homes will provide short-term beds for children

waiting for a permanent home. In Corrections, \$500,000 will provide probation officers for specialized caseloads for dual-diagnosis offenders with children. Research demonstrates that increased supervision coupled with participation in accountability programs can significantly reduce the number of violations by offenders.

Protect and support children in state custody. There are approximately 1,900 children in out-of-home care. Children in state custody can be difficult and often have many challenges. Most children in foster care eventually return home; visits between children and parents can reduce the time a child stays in state custody. \$750,000 will implement Family Visitation Centers in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Mat-Su, Kenai, Juneau and Bethel, so parents can visit children in a neutral setting.

The Health Passport Project is a \$579,000 joint effort between the Division of Family and Youth Services and Public Health Nursing to provide every child in foster care with a documented health history. Relatives can often provide the best foster placement for a child in state custody, but social workers sometimes have difficulty finding them. \$60,000 will start a pilot project in Anchorage to help caseworkers locate adult relatives of children in state custody.

Improve results for those who commit crimes and their families. Alaska's average juvenile probation officer caseload is 31 to 1. The National Advisory Council recommends an intensive caseload of 12 to 1. Seven new juvenile probation officers can be added for \$500,000 to reduce the caseload to 28 to 1, which is still well above recommended levels. To help children whose parents are in prison, \$515,000 will add case managers to identify at-risk children and collaborate with community programs to provide early intervention and ongoing support during the parents' sentence.

Help foster parents. Foster parents are paid an average of \$22.34 per day, a rate set in 1998 with the initial SMART START initiative. Alaska needs foster parents, but in a March 2001 survey by the University of Alaska Anchorage, 40% said the monetary stipend was inadequate to meet the basic needs of a foster child. The current rate was based on 1993 federal poverty guidelines and does not reflect the 23.45% increase in the cost of living increase since then. \$1.3 million will increase the Foster Care Base Rate by \$3.02 to \$25.36 per day.

Successful Children — \$600,000 of general funds, plus federal funds

Promote early childhood literacy. Improving the early language development of children 0-8 years is the cornerstone for successful reading. With a \$100,000 investment, an early literacy project will coordinate existing resources and new federal funds to ensure the effective delivery of age appropriate early literacy instruction by parents, care givers, educators and student assistants.

Improve child care quality. Training is a key component of improving the quality of early care and education. The Alaska Vocational Technical Center has an early childhood education professional development project to train child care workers up through the Certified Development Associate level. Funding for the instructor will come from the joint state-university System for Early Education Development (SEED) project.

\$500,000 in state general funds will be used to strengthen existing Head Start programs, expand service to additional children and families, assist programs in meeting federal Head Start performance requirements, and help grantees meet the 20% matching requirement to access new federal program funds.

Improve K-12 education. In addition to SMART START / STRONG FUTURE, the Governor supports the full Year 2 recommendation of the Education Funding Task Force for additional resources to improve student and school performance. \$31 million is proposed in legislation; \$1.7 million is in the operating budget for the Department of Education and Early Development.

Understanding the FY2003 Budget – Smart Start / Strong Future

all dollars in thousands				
	Dept	General Funds	Federal Funds	Other Funds
Healthy Children				
Reduce Tobacco Use, Especially Among Children				
Tobacco program increase from \$3 million to \$7.12 million (Legislation will establish Tobacco Control Board: \$296.1)	HSS			\$4,123.9
Expand Alcohol Treatment				
Alcohol Treatment for Women with Children	HSS	\$1,241.0 (plus 750.0 capital)		
Juvenile Alcohol Intervention (ASAP) and Treatment	HSS	\$839.1		
Fight Inhalant Abuse				
Alaskans Collaborating for Teens	HSS	\$470.0		
Improve Children's Health				
Child Health Indicators Program	HSS, Educ	\$90.0		
Federal Farmers Market - WIC Program Increase	HSS	\$78.4	\$1,200.0	
Mental Health clinicians to help foster parents with special needs children	HSS	\$86.0		\$86.0
Infant Learning Program service expansion	HSS	\$200.0		
Children's Environmental Health Project	DEC	\$175.0		
Suicide Prevention Council and grant funds	HSS	<u>\$500.0</u>		
Healthy Children		\$3,679.5	\$1,200.0	\$4,209.9
Safe Children				
Zero Tolerance - Respond to all Reports of Harm				
Child Protection Investigators	Pub Saf	\$825.0		
Family Assessment Response Program Expansion	HSS	\$975.0		
Child Advocacy Centers	HSS		\$1,000.0	
Mental Health Stabilization Home	HSS	\$50.0		\$600.0
Family Visitation Centers	HSS	\$750.0		
Family Futures - Probation/Parole Officers for Offenders with Children	Corr	\$471.2		\$28.8
Protect and Support Children in State Custody				
Health Passport Project	HSS	\$145.1		\$434.7
Relative Navigators Pilot Project	HSS	\$50.0	\$10.0	
Foster Care Base Rate increase	HSS	\$909.5	\$349.0	
Improve Results for Those Who Commit Crimes				
Juvenile Probation Officers	HSS	\$500.0		
Help Children with Parents in Prison	HSS, Corr	<u>\$250.0</u>		<u>\$265.0</u>
Safe Children		\$4,925.8	\$1,359.0	\$1,328.5
Successful Children				
Promote Early Childhood Literacy	Educ	\$100.0		
Improve Child Care Quality				
AVTEC Child Development Instructor	Educ			\$65.0
Head Start Funding	Educ	<u>\$500.0</u>	federal amount not yet known	
Successful Children		\$600.0	\$0.0	\$65.0
Total for Smart Start / Strong Future		\$9,205.3	\$2,559.0	\$5,603.4
		All Funds Total: \$17,367.7		